



Pentecost, Year A, June 4, 2017 –

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Recently I was thinking about the limitations of a particular family member – blind spots that make seeing things from another person’s perspective impossible. *Blind spots/limitations are modern speak for sin!*

Here’s a story that describes sin in a different way:

”A man crying from the depths of hell is pleading for release. When asked the good he’s done in his life, all he can remember is that while walking in the woods one day he saw a spider and didn’t kill it.

At once, the thin slivery thread of the spider web is let down to him in hell. Grasping eagerly at this rope of hope he’s lifted out of his misery. His fellow sufferers – seeing him about to escape – clutch his garment and his feet. Amazingly all begin to be lifted up together.

But the man – fearing the web might break – starts kicking at them crying – let go! Let go!!

When they do let go – the thread breaks - and they all fall back into hell. The thread which was strong enough to hold a community of sufferers – couldn’t bear the burden of one selfish soul!”

Selfishness is a limitation – so is isolation. Both are sins because they keep us locked away from God and each other. *The Holy Spirit is the antidote for selfishness, isolation and whatever else that ails us.*

The Holy Spirit is the God who creates community with you and your neighbor. It creates community with you and God. The Holy Spirit is the *thread/ the glue -- like Velcro-- the Holy Spirit* holds us together in love and community. It's the Spirit of the risen Christ literally knitting us together in love.

Here's the point: when God said, "*It's not good for humans to be alone*" – God meant it & did something about it! *What God did was to send us the Spirit of the Risen Christ to weave us together.*

Today we celebrate Pentecost, which is the Feast of Connection. Friends, connection is sorely needed in our time! Christ came that we might have life and connection brings life. Disconnection --- as we see in our weekly news horrors – brings death. Today we celebrate life and connection.

Pentecost answers the question posed by a Michigan Bishop, Ken Untener: "*Did you make the earth a kind or an unkind place?*" That's what the spirit knitting us together does – when we're open to it-- we're kind -- we're connected!

Pentecost marks the coming of the Holy Spirit to believers. The Book of Acts reports that on the first Pentecost, Christ's Spirit *changed* all who received it. Here's the good news: *today you can exchange your loneliness, selfishness, fear or any other limitation – for the life giving spirit of the risen Christ*

Now, to the first Christian Pentecost: the story takes place in Jerusalem at Pentecost, which at the time celebrated both the harvest and the giving of the law. Thousands of Jews from all over were gathered in Jerusalem. *With them were -- the disciples, women who were followers of Jesus, and of course - His mother.*

The followers of Jesus met together in the upper room-- the place of the last Supper and Jesus' Resurrection appearances. Suddenly, there was a great loud noise – *signaling the coming of the promised gift of Christ's Spirit.*

With that power, the disciples and all the people began to understand one another and Peter began to preach.

It was the greatest sermon ever given. Today we heard the beginning of Acts Chapter Two – this is at the end of Chapter Two. I encourage you to read it yourself. I'm about to give you the Cliff notes version. Now, listen up. St. Peter said:

"Jesus who was crucified, God raised up. Repent. Get baptized, and receive the Holy Spirit. "Got that?"

" Jesus who was crucified, God raised up. Repent. Get baptized, and receive the Spirit." (Acts 2.38, 2.40)

So, what does that mean for you and me on this Pentecost? First, it means that God keeps God's promise. When we were faithless, which the whole biblical narrative chronicles---- God was faithful.

When our sin threatened to destroy us, instead of a flood ---- God sent His only Begotten One to save us. Through the sacrifice of Himself, God remembered and kept His promise to Noah and us.

*Here's what you need to remember: the purpose of God coming among us in Jesus Christ and the purpose of the sending of the Holy Spirit is ----- *God wants us to be in community with one another and with Him. God doesn't want us to be alone!**

*So, if you feeling alone, confess it and ask the Risen One to come and *make His home in you.* Let me put this a different way using a story from a pastor named Joe Klein.*

A young man and woman were on their first date. At the conclusion of the date – they were standing under the porch light of her house. The young man asked, "Can I kiss you?" (Clearly, this is a 1950's story!) She didn't say anything --- so he corrected his grammar and said, "May I kiss you?"

She still didn't say anything so he said, "Are you deaf?"

She responded, "Are you paralyzed?"

Pentecost is an opportunity for us to exchange our paralysis for the energy of the spirit and connect with one another, God and His mission in the world. So connect!! Happy Pentecost. Amen.